



City of Alexandria

Transportation Commission

Regular Meeting

March 4, 2009
7:30 p.m.
City Hall, Room 1101

MINUTES

Commissioners Present: Chairman Sean Kumar, Mayor William D. Euille, Councilman Timothy Lovain, J. Lawrence Robinson, Jayme Blakeslee, Kevin Posey, Jennifer Mitchell, Donna Fossum,

Others Present: Mark Jinks, City Manager's Office, Tom Culpepper, T&ES, Yon Lambert, T&ES, Sandra Marks, T&ES, Karl Moritz, P&Z, Pat Mann, P&Z, Joanne Lepanto, Seminary Hill Association, William A. Newman, Hamptons @ Stonegate, Charlotte Landis, ICCA, Geoffrey M. Goodale, Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Association, Patricia Schubert, ICCA, Annabelle Fisher, Andres Domeyko, Eisenhower Partnership

1. Minutes

The minutes of the February 4, 2009 meeting were presented by Chairman Kumar who asked for any added comments to the minutes. There being none, Commissioner Robinson made a motion to approve the minutes with a second by Commissioner Fossum. The February 4, 2009 minutes were approved 8-0.

2. Consideration of Comments to the Virginia Department of Transportation on the I-95/395 HOV/Bus/HOT Lanes Project (**Public Hearing**)

Tom Culpepper, T&ES staff, provided a presentation of VDOT's project to implement high-occupancy vehicle/toll (HOT)/bus lanes on I-95 and I-395.

Tom described the interchange as an opportunity for the City to submit the Commission's comments to VDOT. The project is a 56 miles project that extends from Eads Street in Arlington County to Spotsylvania County. It is

broken up into 2 sections; from Eads Street to south of Dumfries, and from Dumfries to further south. This project would convert the existing HOV system to a 3-lane system. It would also allow vehicles that do not meet the existing HOV requirements pay a toll. Currently, the project has completed the environmental review process of the northern section in January 2009. A regional transit study was completed. A bus rapid transit study has also been initiated and scheduled to be completed in spring 2009. Construction of the project is slated for late 2009 or early 2010 for the northern section. Of concern to some jurisdictions are the cross sections. In Alexandria, there will be a standard 12-foot lane in the center and two 11-foot lanes. The shoulder widths in Alexandria will be 2 ½ feet and 10 feet. Between Seminary Road and Shirlington, all three lanes will be 11-feet wide with shoulders 3-9 feet. Commissioners questioned the safety of the narrow lanes and shoulders and access for emergency vehicle responders.

The City is on record as being opposed to the HOV access at Seminary Road and Duke Street and as a result adopted Resolution 2048. Arlington County is withholding their support of the HOT lanes awaiting answers to their questions to VDOT for additional information and clarification. Prince William County is opposed to the VDOT project and Fairfax County has voiced their concerns of the project as well.

The Chairman introduced two citizens who requested time to speak at the Transportation Commission's public hearing:

Geoffrey Goodale of the Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Association

Good evening members of the Transportation Commission. Thank you very much allowing me this opportunity to speak. My name is Geoffrey Goodale, President of the Brookville-Seminary Valley Civic Association. BSCVA is comprised of individuals from several hundred households in the west end of Alexandria and the Seminary Valley area and it is in very close proximity to Seminary Road. For this reason, the HOT lanes project is of great interest to our civic association. The comments that we submitted to VDOT were included in attachment 4. I won't belabor them but in summary, we feel there are too many unanswered questions, many of which Mr. Culpepper accurately identified in his presentation in more detail. And for that reason, and considering that Arlington County is withholding support of this resolution and other regional transportation organizations including the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority have submitted comments requesting that VDOT and its private sector partner _____ provide more details on various issues including the potential impact the HOT access at Seminary Road would have. We urge you to recommend to the Council that they consider adopting a similar type of withhold support resolution that Arlington County passed asking that hard data be provided relating to these important

questions that will have impact not only on BSCVA members but other citizens in Alexandria as well. So again, in conclusion, we urge you to recommend to the Council to adopt a withholding support resolution until VDOT and its private sector partner provide answers to the important questions that have been imposed by Arlington County and other general transportation organizations. Thank you.

Joanne Lepanto, Seminary Hills Association:

My name is Joanne Lepanto. I live at 4009 North Garland Street. I am President of the Seminary Hills Association and I'm speaking on behalf of Seminary Hills tonight. Seminary Hills is opposed to HOT lanes inside the beltway on 395 in general and we have several specific concerns. First and foremost, we are adamantly opposed to any off ramps onto Seminary Road East. I'd like to thank everyone in the City who is responsible for the 2002 resolution and I hope that you will uphold that. Seminary Road is a residential street that runs right through the heart of Seminary Hill and connects with other residential streets including Jordan, Howard, Braddock, Ft. Williams, Quaker and Janneys, all of which could and would likely be used as cut through routes through our neighborhoods. We oppose such a ramp even if it is initially designated as transit or bus only. Once it is built, there will always be the potential for it to open up to cars at some point. Also, Seminary Road from 395 to Quaker Lane is already well served by DASH and Metro buses. And by the way, I did speak at the VDOT public hearing. I know one of the citizens recommended opening the proposed bus lane to HUB traffic but I spoke out and opposed that. If an off ramp onto Seminary Road west is desired by a majority of the citizens living west of 395 and supported by the City, it must be designed in a way such that it would not allow vehicles to enter the interchange and circle around and head east on Seminary Road. We are also opposed to a transit being built in the middle of Seminary Road interchange. The proposed change to the Shirlington circle, with so many traffic signals, is just frightening. Speaking more broadly, I question the wisdom in taking one of the most, if not the most successful car pool projects in the country and risking compromising its success. I also question the wisdom of extending HUB or HOT lanes from so far south heading north onto 395. Doesn't this send the wrong message? Move as far away as you want, and we will make it easier for you to commute by car into one of the most congested traffic situations in the country. And once HUB or HOT lanes are built all the way to Massaponox, even more housing developments will follow. We have safety concerns with the narrow widths proposed for some of the lanes and shoulders, which could increase the number of accidents and most certainly would negatively impact the accident response times. And how would HOV versus HOT cars be identified. If the technology doesn't already exist and it hasn't already been tested and proven in the real world, that's not good enough. And there's the visual pollution. At the community meeting in February, VDOT spoke of

extensive new signage. How many signs? Where? What will they look like? And more information is needed on the proposed sound walls, which on VDOT's maps, line both sides of virtually every foot of space along 395 between Seminary and Quaker. Will they really help? Will 395 be made as ugly as what is already happening to the beltway? VDOT has been vague about many trees will be lost. We need more detailed information and commitments. I was told by someone from VDOT that unlike the beltway HOT lanes, the 95/395 proposed HOT lanes would not include penalties to be paid to the operator in the event the HOT lanes do not generate sufficient toll revenue. If this proposal moves forward, please make certain that this is indeed the case. If gas prices return to \$4 dollars a gallon or more, and people get out of their cars, whether HOV or HOT vehicles, Virginia tax payers should not bare this risk. And finally, what will happen to all of the vehicles as they approach the Pentagon and the 14th Street Bridge? Where will they go? I'm sure you've all heard the same reports over the last couple weeks in the news saying that I-395 and the 14th Street Bridge is the most congested traffic area in Northern Virginia. VDOT has clearly not addressed this adequately. In closing, Seminary Hill opposed the construction of HOT lanes on 395. There is no benefit yet we will bare many costs in the interest of encouraging people to commute from much too far away into what is already a terribly congested area. If however this project does move forward, please do not allow access from these lanes onto Seminary Road east. Thank you for your consideration.

The Chairman asked for any other comments from speakers. There being none, the public comment period was closed and the Commission discussions on the item began.

After discussion among commissioners, Tom Culpepper invited Commissioner Blakely to assist in drafting a letter to be considered by Council. Commissioner Posey made a motion to recommend that the City Council withhold support for the project unless issues identified by staff and the community are addressed. Commissioner Robinson seconded the motion. The motion carried 8-0.

3. Federal Economic Stimulus Package

Item deferred

4. Subcommittee Updates

Sandra Marks, T&ES staff, reported work was done by two sub-committees established to look at process and prioritization for the Long Range Plan (LRP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Sandra summarized the discussions that took place in each sub-committee.

Commissioners Mitchell and Kumar felt it was valuable for the public to have a chance early in the process to give input to the Commission. The Commission will also look at

the best way to give input on transportation recommendations in small area plans. In coordination with the Planning Department we will ensure that information is shared early enough in the small area plan process for the Commission to give formal guidance to the Planning staff and Planning Commission

The sub-committee members felt it was important to start the process with a clean slate of projects so that the list being maintained is a truly prioritized and endorsed list. Staff will recommend projects to be removed from the list for consideration by the Commission. A proposed timeline for annual TIP process was presented with milestones working backwards from September.

Commissioner Posey added that the LRP can be summarized into questions of livability, control, connectivity, environment and alternatives. The TIP has issues of funding to be considered, what conditions have changed, and maintenance issues. The Commission will give feedback on the draft criteria proposed by the sub-committee.

5. Other Business: Mayor Euille reported on the recent Metro Board meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Fossum, seconded by Commissioner Blakesly.